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THE TIBETAN A RIG TRIBE IN RMA LHO (HENAN) MONGOLIAN  
AUTONOMOUS COUNTY: PLACE, HISTORY,  
RITUAL, PARTIES, AND SONG

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ABSTRACT

Place, local history, ritual, parties, and songs (including three with musical notation) are described for an area in Rma lho (Henan) Mongolian Autonomous County, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, PR China that is home to the Tibetan Gtsang a rig Tribe. Rapid change from a traditional herding lifestyle to settlement in permanent housing, how tribal rituals maintain A rig Tribe identity, dramatic changes in the local songscape based on the author's personal experiences, and the songs' musical characteristics are addressed.

KEYWORDS

A rig, Gtsang lha sde, Henan Mongolian Autonomous County, Lha sde gong ma, Mtsho sngon, Rma lho, Sog rdzong, Tibetan tribal history

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INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

I<sup>2</sup> was born in 1994 and lived until 2007 in Lha sde gong ma<sup>3</sup> 'Upper Lha sde' (Ska chung, Gaqun) Community,<sup>4</sup> Gtsang a rig (Nyin mtha',<sup>5</sup> Ningmute) Township, Rma lho (Sog rdzong, Henan) Mongolian Autonomous County, Rma lho (Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, PR China. I and my family then moved to what is now the small community of Zam kha, which required about two hours by riding yak at that time.

The information that I provide in this paper is from my personal experiences and observations, conversations I had with local people, and various published references.

Rma lho County had a population of 30,100 in 2002, of whom 28,113 were classified as Mongolian (Tsering Dhondup 2014:87) and 490 were classified as Tibetan (Lin 2006:45). Pirie (2012:101) made this observation about Yul rgan nyin (Youganning), the county seat:

The Sokwo<sup>6</sup> people are descendants of the Mongol settlers and the current government has chosen to promote this identity - the town is full of signs in Mongol script, which no one can read. However, to all intents and purposes the Sokwo people are Tibetan...

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<sup>1</sup> We thank *AHP* editors and two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments.

<sup>2</sup> All first person references refer to the first author, except as noted in the Appendix.

<sup>3</sup> "Lha sde" may be translated as 'deity community' and suggests that community residents are key supporters of a monastery. The term is not unique to Rma lho County, for example, Bla brang Monastery has eight *lha sde* - *lha sde shog kha brgyad* 'eight main supporter-communities'.

<sup>4</sup> My national identification card gives my residence as Gaqun Cun 'Village', however, the seal from the local community government lists "Gaqun Muweihui" 'Herding Community'. I have chosen to use the term "community" in this paper.

<sup>5</sup> Gtsang a rig is the local name of the township. The official name is Nyin mtha'/Ningmute.

<sup>6</sup> "Sokwo" was a general name that many Tibetans outside the county used to refer to residents of Rma lho County. However, Gtsang a rig Tribe members who lived in Rma lho County referred to themselves as Bod 'Tibetan'.

In 2016, herding communities in Nyin mtha' Township included Nyin mtha', 'Obs thung (Wutong), 'Brug lung (Zhoulong), Mdzo mo (Zuomao), Su'u chin (Suqing), Bde ldan (Dedan), Sha la (Xiala), Be'u la (Weila), Gser gzhung (Saieryong), Glang chen (Langqin), and Lha sde gong ma. Locally, these herding communities were collectively known as Gtsang a rig, and were located on the banks of the upper reaches of the Yellow River. 'Obs thung and Lha sde gong ma were west of the Yellow River, while the other communities mentioned above were on the east side. The total population of Nyin mtha' Township was 10,197 in 2013.<sup>1</sup>

"A rig" refers to a tribe (of which I am a member) that local elders say originally lived at the foot of A mye rma chen Mountain in the contemporary Mgo log (Guoluo) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. In 2016, most A rig tribal people lived in Upper, Middle, and Lower A rig. Upper A rig refers to Rdza chu kha in Ser shul (Shiqu) County, Dkar mdzes (Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province. Middle A rig refers to Gtsang a rig; and Lower A rig refers to Mdo la (Qilian) County, Mtsho byangs (Haibei) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. Though local A rig tribal members are officially classified as Mongolian, they consider themselves to be Tibetan.<sup>2</sup>

### THE RECENT HISTORY OF GTSANG LHA SDE<sup>3</sup>

Before the time of great social chaos that began in the 1950s and continued into the 1970s, a single group of people herded mainly in Mtha (Mtha ma), Dbu (Dbu ma), and Sdi (Sdi khog). Mtha refers to a large valley between Dbu ma and Sdi khog valleys. Dbu ma is located in the center of Lha sde gong ma and features such locally well-known places as Dbu ma'i sne'u rdza 'Holy Rock Mountain of Dbu ma'; Dbu

<sup>1</sup> This information is from Nyin mtha's official site: <http://goo.gl/NJzJPQ>, accessed 19 March 2016.

<sup>2</sup> For more on the complex issue of Mongolian-Tibetan identity in Nyin mtha', see Diemberger (2007).

<sup>3</sup> Gtsang lha sde is also called Gtsang sde ma.

ma'i gzhung chu 'River of Dbu ma', a Yellow River tributary; and Dbu ma'i bde skyid thang 'The Happy Plain of Dbu ma' where festivals and religious rituals were held. Sdi khog is situated in the vicinity of the Sdi chu River and Sdi khog Valley in the Lha sde zhol ma.

Mtha, Dbu, and Sdi were included in the Gtsang lha sde territory. However, historically Gtsang lha sde included other areas in both Upper Rta bo (Dawu) and Lower Rta bo (Xiadawu) in Rma chen (Maqin) County, Mgo log Prefecture and Gyu rngog in 'Ba' rdzong (Tongde) County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.

During the time of great social chaos, Lha sde gong ma residents fled to Dngul rwa (Oula Town), which at that time was not a town. Continued conflict meant that they moved near Ska chen Valley in the Mda tshan Tribe (Saierlong Township). The place where the Lha sde gong ma people lived was a valley named Ska chung near the larger Ska chen Valley. In 1983, Lha sde gong ma residents' repeated request that they be allowed to return to Lha sde gong ma was agreed to. Subsequently, Ska chung was the official name given to the community where the Lha sde gong ma people settled after returning to their original home area.

From about 1997-2005, the Gtsang a rig Tribe (Nyin mtha' Township) and the Dngul rwa Tribe in Rma chu (Maqu) County became locked in conflict. About thirty people from both sides died.<sup>1</sup>

## ZAM KHA

Zam kha 'bridge sides' (Huanghe yan 'Yellow River Banks') is also known as Lus sa. Located in Nyin mtha' Township, it is sandwiched between the Yellow and Rtse chu (Zequ) rivers near 'Obs thung, Lha sde gong ma, Gser gzhung, and 'Brug lhung herding communities.

In around 2009, the government built about 150 houses in Zam kha. Also in 2016, some families from 'Obs thung, 'Brug lung, Gser

<sup>1</sup> See Pirie (2012) for more on this conflict.

gzhung, and Lha sde gong ma communities lived in Zam kha, however, most families were from 'Obs thung.

Zam kha had several small health clinics, including the Nyin mtha' Number Two Primary School Clinic, 'Obs thung Community Health Clinic, and three privately-operated drugstores. Additionally, about eight shops sold snacks, drinks, cigarettes, liquor, *dar lcog*,<sup>1</sup> and articles for daily use. Three small Tibetan restaurants offered primarily yak-based meat dishes, e.g., noodles, both steamed and boiled stuffed dumplings, meat fried with green chilies, and rice. Each restaurant had one room, each with six to nine tables for customers.

A small Muslim restaurant with proprietors from Ka chu (Linxia), Gansu offered a variety of noodle dishes with the two most popular being *gtsab thug* (*paozhang*) and *'then thug* (*mianpian*), which refer to, respectively, long noodles fried with vegetables and short flat noodles cooked in soup.

Zam kha was also home to the A rig Yellow River Stupa designed by A dkon mchog chos 'phel (b. 1944),<sup>2</sup> funded mainly by 'Obs thung residents, and completed in 2007. Situated in a location near both the old and new Yellow River bridges, the stupa featured a number of smaller subsidiary stupas.<sup>3</sup>

A wooden bridge was built here in about 1983. My maternal grandmother (Bskal bzang sgrol ma, Mgon po mtsho, Mgo pa, b. 1938)<sup>4</sup> told me that before that time, horses were forced to enter the river and then those people that wanted to cross held a horse's tail as the horse swam across. In 2012, the government built a new metal bridge.

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<sup>1</sup> Locally, *dar lcog* generally refers to thin pieces of cloth printed with Tibetan scriptures that are used to adorn *lab tse* 'cairns'.

<sup>2</sup> A dkon mchog chos 'phel was the leader of Rma lho County in 1984 (Gtsang chu phran 2012:8).

<sup>3</sup> For more about the stupa see Chos 'phel rgya mtsho (2014:25-43).

<sup>4</sup> She is locally known as Mgo pa. After my maternal grandfather's (Blo bzang bsod nams, Blo bsod 1935-1998) death, Grandmother took religious vows and received the religious name Bskal bzang sgrol ma from a local *bla ma*. Hereafter "grandfather" refers to my maternal grandfather and "grandmother" refers to my maternal grandmother.

The bridge was three meters wide and sixteen meters long. In winter, the distance from the bridge to the river surface was about twenty meters and in summer it was eight to ten meters. The vertical distance from the top of the gully to the bridge was about eighty meters. The tracks to and from the bridge were slippery during rainy days and covered by snow and ice in winter. This resulted in many yaks and horses losing their footing and then plunging to their deaths into the depths of the gully.

Reaching the bridge required navigating down a very narrow zigzag path and then once the bridge was crossed, clambering up a similar path. Bicycles and motorcycles had to be carried on the backs of their owners down to the bridge and back up again. Consequently, very few bicycles and motorcycles crossed the river.

The only motorcycles I knew that ever crossed this bridge were operated by my maternal cousin, 'Jigs byed skyabs (b. 1987), and another relative, Mgon po (1970-2014). The sounds of their motorcycles were the first engines that I ever heard, which I vividly recall to this day. Yaks were so afraid when they first saw and heard such noisy machines that they ran away.

During the winter, the Yellow River froze and locals put stones about the size of a brick in a line on the surface of the frozen river from one side to the other while chanting *ma Ni* and blowing on each stone. This was locally called *gser zam 'phen pa* 'a golden bridge'.

In terms of local education, Number Two Nyin mtha' Town Primary School had six grades.<sup>1</sup>

In 2007, my family moved from Lha sde gong ma to Zam kha. At that time, this move required packing belongings on yaks and riding a horse or yak for about three hours. We moved to a two-room house in Zam kha because my parents wanted us to receive a formal education. Once we were in school, it meant that we could provide only limited assistance in herding. Furthermore, after land was fenced in 2007, my family had only my mother's (Nyi ma mtsho, Nyi do, b. 1968)

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<sup>1</sup> I was one of fifteen students in the class that first graduated from this school in 2008.

portion of land, which was inadequate pasture for our sixty yaks and one hundred sheep.

When my family moved to Zam kha, my sister (Gyang 'dzin, b. 1997) was in grade two and I was in grade five. We boarded at the school. My family paid 4,000 RMB a year for the two-room house that we lived in. We also used it as a shop that sold flour, rice, barley, cooking oil, instant noodles, toilet paper, tampons, lotion, chopsticks, bowls, pots, thermoses, snacks, cigarettes, and a variety of beverages. Due to growth in our business, we eventually rented another two rooms to store goods. These two rooms were farther from the main road than our house, therefore, the rent was less - 3,500 RMB per year. We were busy, especially Mother. We frequently went back and forth between our shop and the storage area. This continued until 2014 when my family paid a Tibetan family (parents and their two sons in their twenties) from Gansu to build a house for my family on land we bought from a local family near the new bridge (Ningmte huanghe diaoqiao). We paid 70,000 RMB for about three *mu* (0.2 hectares). Altogether, my family spent approximately 350,000 RMB for the land and new house. The government gave 4,000 RMB.<sup>1</sup>

#### GTSANG LHA SDE IN 2016

In 2016, Gtsang lha sde included Lha sde zhol ma 'Lower Lha sde' (Lade) in Rwa rgya (Lajia) Township, Rma chen County; and Lha sde gong ma in Nyin mtha' Township. Administratively, Lha sde zhol ma is part of Mgo log Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, while Lha sde gong ma is part of Rma lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.

Gtsang sgar (Sgar, Gtsang dgon pa 'Gtsang Monastery'),<sup>2</sup> located in 'Ba' rdzong County, is Lha sde gong ma's key monastery,

<sup>1</sup> The government maintained that the cost of building a two-room house was 8,000 RMB, consequently, 4,000 RMB was provided as an incentive to families who moved to the town and built houses. This explains why my family received 4,000 RMB from the government.

<sup>2</sup> Gtsang dgon don 'grub rab brtan gling. The sixth Gtsang paN+Ti ta was the ranking *bla ma* at this monastery in 2016.

owing in part to Lha sde gong ma being one of Gtsang Monastery's *lha sde*.

Meanwhile, Rwa rgya Monastery in Rma chen County is Lha sde zhol ma residents' key monastery, largely because it is within the same township and is closer than Gtsang Monastery.

#### THE SPYI SRUNG RITUAL

Lha sde gong ma and Lha sde zhol maintained a strong sense of unity, considering themselves as being Gtsang lha sde. An example of this is the Spyi srung Ritual, which was revived in 1988. The Spyi srung Ritual in Gtsang a rig was initiated by Mig dmar dge bshes 'jam dbyings don 'grub rin po che<sup>1</sup> in 1861 (A dkon mchog chos 'phel 2014:44).

In the summer of 2016, this ritual was jointly held by the eleven communities in Nyin mtha' Township, near the Number Three Township Primary School. This is called Gtsang a rig spyi chen 'Gtsang a rig's Large Spyi srung Ritual'.

I will now describe Gtsang lha sde's Spyi srung Ritual, which is a smaller version of the Gtsang a rig spyi chen. It was held jointly by Lha sde gong ma and Lha sde zhol ma on the first through the seventh days of the sixth lunar month for two years running in Lha sde gong ma, the next two years in Lha sde zhol ma, and so on.

In 2015, the Gtsang lha sde'i Spyi srung Ritual was held on the Happy Plain of Dbu ma in Lha sde gong ma. About fifteen tents of varying sizes were pitched in a circle. All the *bla ma* and monks from both Lha sde gong ma and Lha sde zhol ma communities were invited to chant. People were forbidden to ride horses, motorcycles, or drive vehicles inside the circle of tents. *Bla ma* and monks chanted, men and boys offered *bsang* 'incense' on the *bsang khri* 'incense burning platform', and women and children made prostrations. Religious activities were held in the morning and the various entertainment programs were held in the afternoon. Activities during the ritual included horse races, running matches, singing, and competitions to

<sup>1</sup> More correctly, Dge bshes mig dmar 'jam dbyings don 'grub rin po che.



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judge the "purity" of the Tibetan language spoken by contestants.<sup>1</sup>

Eleven tents were pitched. The '*du khang* 'assembly/congregation hall tent' was the largest tent, located in the upper (north) center where *bla ma* and monks chanted. A small tent decorated with colorful fringe at the top was to the right<sup>2</sup> of the assembly hall tent. A black yak-hair tent for *sngags pa* 'lay tantric specialists' was to the northwest, a black yak-hair tent to the southeast was used for cooking, and seven white tents of varying sizes were to the south, accommodating the ten groups of participants from Gtsang lha sde. On average, about 200 people attended the ritual per day.

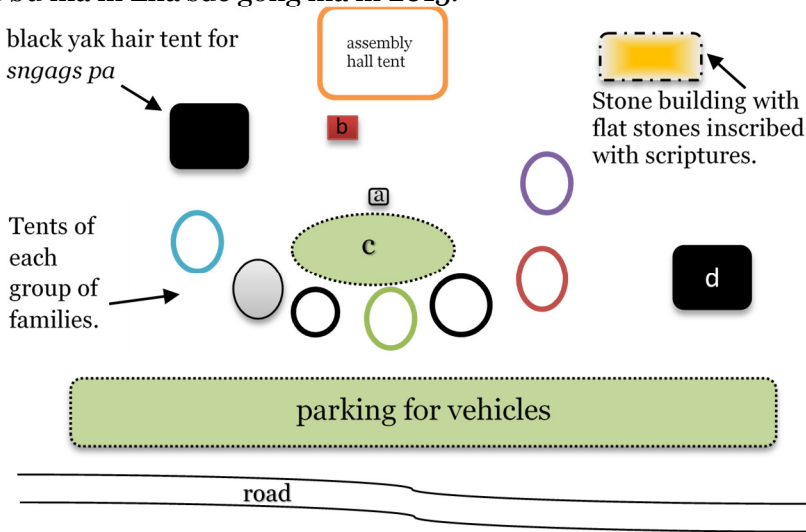
The necessity of herding livestock meant that all able-bodied locals could not attend every day. Locals were expected to attend when they were free from herding. There were ten *tsho chung* 'groups living near each other', with each group having about thirty families. Lha sde gong ma had two groups. Every morning at six AM, two monks blew conch shells. After the *bla ma* and monks got up, they came to the '*du khang* and chanted for about three minutes before breakfast. At about eight AM, they began chanting and continued until about ten AM.

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<sup>1</sup> The contestants' knowledge of Tibetan vocabulary for "new" terms, such as "WeChat," "motorcycle," and "mobile phone" was evaluated.

<sup>2</sup> While standing in the door of the tent, looking outside.

Figure 1. The Gtsang lha sde spyi srung Ritual on the Happy Plain of Dbu ma in Lha sde gong ma in 2015.



- (a) incense burning platform
- (b) a small tent for the monastery accountant
- (c) main gathering area
- (d) black yak-hair tent for cooking

In the mornings, lay participants circumambulated and prostrated to the assembly tent where monks and *bla ma* chanted and then the laity circumambulated the main tent. Locals usually made 108 prostrations, but counted it as one hundred to ensure that at least one hundred prostrations had been made.

There was a daily quota of chanting that included *Skyabs 'gro* 'Taking Refuge', *ma Ni, Sgrol ma* 'Scripture of Tara', and *Ltungs bshags* 'Scripture of Confession' for the whole community, but not for individuals. The entire community completed the daily quota. *Bla ma*, monks, and elders kept count and told those assembled when the daily quota was complete.

Men and boys offered incense consisting of *bsang rtsi* in a *bsang khug* 'incense bag' that contained loose *ja* 'tea leaves and twigs'<sup>1</sup> mixed with *rtsam pa* 'barley flour' and half-roasted barley; *shug pa* 'juniper needles'; fruits (when available) such as apples and pears; *mngar gsum* 'three sweets' that consisted of *shel ka ra* 'crystal sugar', *bu ram* 'brown sugar shaped like gold ingots', and *sbrang rtsi* 'honey'; *gos chen* 'satin and/or silk'; and *chab* 'clean water or liquor'.

Men and boys used matches to set dry yak dung on fire.<sup>2</sup> After the yak dung caught fire, juniper needles were added, which produced aromatic smoke. It was considered very auspicious and a very successful offering if there was a large quantity of smoke and if the smoke rose straight into the sky. Next, *bsang rtsi* from the *bsang khug* was added. The entire community gave the incense offered during the ritual. It was considered a richer offering because it included such materials as *mngar gsum* and expensive cloth.

Every afternoon there were games, e.g., men competed to see who could lift a *sa sgye* 'sack' (plastic bag filled with damp soil, tied with ropes weighing 150 to 200 kilograms). The winner was the man who could lift the sack to his chest, place it on his shoulder, and then walk around. If no man could do this, then the winner was the man who could lift it to his chest.

Another game was *glang chen sa gshag* 'elephant scrapes the ground', played by two men using a sash that had been tied together,

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<sup>1</sup> Bought in the county town from mostly Muslim vendors (who spoke fluent Tibetan). Until about 2010, we purchased this tea in large wooden boxes that were commonly stacked in tents next to the wall directly across from the tent opening, along with yak-skin containers of barley, wheat, and rice. Such boxes of tea were common gifts at weddings. After about 2010, although large boxes of tea were still sold, it was common for tea to be sold by the *rgya ma* 'half kilo'.

<sup>2</sup> They generally did not use a cigarette lighter because the gas from the lighter was considered polluting and thus might irritate the deities. My maternal grandmother told me *me cha* 'flint' was used when she was young, however, the only time I saw anything resembling flint was *me cha* 'silver decorations resembling flint and steel' worn by men. Furthermore, *spen* (a shrub) was considered the best fuel for offerings and, when available, replaced the yak dung.

and passed between the two men's legs. The two men squatted/knelt and then each tried to pull his opponent across a line. There were three bouts and the winner was the man who won two bouts.

Other activities included singing *dmang glu* 'non-instrumental traditional folk songs' and giving speeches featuring many proverbs. The first day was a horse race. Riders were twelve to fifteen-year-old boys<sup>1</sup> who generally weighed sixty kilograms or less. In each of the first three races, in which nine to twelve horses competed, the five horses crossing the finish line first were selected for the final race in which fifteen horses competed. The length of the race course was about one kilometer. The start and finish lines were clearly marked. After the horses had been assembled and were ready to begin the race, a man shouted, "Ya!" and then the horses set out. Five men monitored the finish line. One man identified the first horse to cross the finish line, a second man identified the second, and so on.

For the final race, there were thirteen monitors at the finish line, each charged with identifying, for example, the first horse to cross the line, the second horse, and so on. The owners of these thirteen horses received satin, wool blankets, *kha btags* 'strips of silk offered to show respect', and cash. The amount of cash generally depended on the amount a person wanted to give to show appreciation, and the relationship between the man giving the cash and the owner of the horse. In 2015, gifts of from five to one hundred RMB were common.

At night, only some boys, young men, and some monks stayed in the tents. Other attendees generally returned home.

## MY EXTENDED FAMILY

I will now describe my extended family, beginning with my maternal grandparents. Grandmother had two sons and three daughters. The oldest son died when he was about twenty-seven during the time of great social chaos. The surviving son, my uncle (Dgnos grub, b. 1966)<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I have not seen nor heard of a local female jockey.

<sup>2</sup> "My uncle" refers to my maternal uncle in this article.

is a businessman and lives with his wife and son in Ziling (Xining)<sup>1</sup> City. Aunt Bkra mtsho (Bkra shis mtsho, b. 1962); Aunt Rgya mo (Rgya mo skyid, b. 1964); and my mother.

Next, I will describe the *kzhi rnying* 'root family'/*sbra rnying* 'old tent family'. Grandmother lives in the *kzhi rnying* with aunt Rgya mo; Aunt Rgya mo's husband, Rta mgrin tshe ring (Dmag pa,<sup>2</sup> b. 1955); and their five children. We refer to this family as *yul* 'home', while other locals say Dmag pa *tshang* "Dmag pa's home."<sup>3</sup>

Aunt Bkra mtsho lives with her husband (Bkra shis don 'grub, Bkra do, b. 1952) and their seven children. We refer to this family as *Bkra do tshang* 'Bkra do's home'.<sup>4</sup>

My family has five people: my mother, father (Tshe dpang skyab, A bo, b. 1962), my brother (Lha mo skyabs, b. 1988), my sister, and me. Locals call my family *A bo tshang* 'A bo's home'.

The homes of the three families above were near each other. Fifteen children lived in these families in the early years of the twenty-first century. During Lo sar 'New Year',<sup>5</sup> we children eagerly anticipated singing parties. During this time we had plenty of fruits, candies, and commercial beverages, which were a great attraction.

We did not sing *dmangs glu*<sup>6</sup> during these gatherings because we children thought such songs were out of fashion. I wanted to sing during these parties, but I was shy. I waited for my cousins or Brother to urge me to sing. Brother could play the mandolin very well. He also tied a chopstick across the neck of a guitar (so it would sound like a mandolin) and then played it. His sense of music was so astute that he accompanied us on the guitar regardless of what we sang.

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<sup>1</sup> The capital of Mtsho sngon.

<sup>2</sup> Dmag pa 'groom who comes to live in his wife's home' is Rta mgrin tshe ring's nickname.

<sup>3</sup> Locally, the father's or the grandfather's name is used to designate a family. A female's name is never used unless there are no males in the family.

<sup>4</sup> *Yul* is a term that refers to one's home and *tshang* refers to another person's home.

<sup>5</sup> Locals follow the Chinese lunisolar calendar. However, in 2016, some local families followed the Tibetan lunisolar calendar.

<sup>6</sup> "*Dmangs glu* [are songs that] are not related to courtship and are not accompanied by musical instruments" (Sangs rgyas bkra shis et al. 2015:19).

Brother sang some songs and recorded them on a cassette tape that he entitled *Mjal du 'gro 'Let's Go on Pilgrimage!*<sup>1</sup>

In about 2007, each of our three families was assigned a certain amount of land that was then fenced. Before this time, all three families shared land and water resources. As mentioned earlier, the result of this division was that my parents no longer had enough land to raise enough livestock to make a living. Consequently, we moved to Zam kha where my family opened a store. This division of land and subsequent separation of families meant that the family song meetings also ended.

### MY EXPERIENCES WITH SINGING AND SONG PARTIES

My childhood experiences with songs and singing parties took place between about 2000 and 2007. Songs that were sung when I was a child included *dmangs glu*, *glu shags*,<sup>2</sup> *la gzhas*,<sup>3</sup> and *rdung len*. Nowadays, *deng gzhas* 'modern songs'<sup>4</sup> are also popular in my home

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<sup>1</sup> Brother's favorite singers were Nam mkha' and Lhun 'grub, well-known *rdung len* singers from A mdo. Nam mkha' became widely known after release of his cassette tape *Btsan po'i pho nya 'King's Messenger'*. Lhun 'grub is from Lower Lha sde, which explains why local young people call him A ga lhun 'grub 'Brother Lhun 'grub', suggesting intimacy and adding to his local popularity. A ga locally means 'elder brother'. Local youth add a ga before the names of elders to show respect.

<sup>2</sup> The *glu shags* that I sang were sung antiphonally, and tease, insult, and embarrass those they are sung to. The content might have included the appearance of an individual, a family, or a community; clothing; being impoverished; and a poor singing voice. Curses, overt sexual language, and family ancestry were avoided. The lack of sexual content means that *glu shags* were often sung at wedding parties, singing competitions, and other secular gatherings as a form of entertainment. (This description is taken, with little alteration, from Sangs rgyas bkra shis (2015:20) because it so closely described my experiences and observations.)

<sup>3</sup> Love songs that are sung among young people when their relatives are absent.

<sup>4</sup> Songs that often feature Tibetan language lyrics and sung in a modern, pop style to instrumental accompaniment.

community, for example, Bde skyid tshe ring's<sup>1</sup> songs *Nomad Child* and *Await*.

The first song most children in my extended family learned was *Yar ston*.<sup>2</sup> It features positive lyrics creating clear images, and is easy and brief, making it an ideal children's song. I sang this song many times when I was encouraged to sing during family singing parties and when visiting community homes during Lo sar. *Yar bstod* was always easy for me to sing without embarrassment.

Neither I nor the relatives I consulted could explain the origin of this song.

ཡར་བསྟོན། Yar stod

### Song Text as Performed

<sup>1</sup>ཡ་སྟོན་ཡ་སྟོན་གསེར་གྱི་རི་ལ་ཡ་སྟོན།  
<sup>2</sup>མར་འབབ་མར་འབབ་ཚུ་བོའི་གཞུང་ལ་མར་འབབ།  
<sup>3</sup>ཚུ་བོའི་གཞུང་ལ་གསེར་ཟམ་དགུ་འགྲིག་འཛོམས་ཡོད།  
<sup>4</sup>གསེར་ཟམ་དགུ་འགྲིག་རི་མོ་པ་རྒྱུ་ནི་ཡོད།  
<sup>5</sup>རི་མོ་པ་རྒྱ་བཀྲ་ཤིས་རྒྱལ་བརྒྱད་འཛོམས་ཡོད།  
<sup>6</sup>བཀྲ་ཤིས་རྒྱལ་བརྒྱད་བཀྲ་ལ་ཤིས་པ་ཤོག་ཤོག  
<sup>7</sup>བཀྲ་ཤིས་རྒྱལ་བརྒྱད་བཀྲ་ལ་ཤིས་པ་ཤོག་ཤོག

<sup>1</sup>ya ston ya ston gser gyi ri la ya ston

<sup>2</sup>mar 'bab mar 'bab chu bo'i gzhung la mar 'bab

<sup>3</sup>chu bo'i gzhung la gser zam dgu 'grig 'dzoms yod

<sup>4</sup>gser zam dgu 'grig ri mo pa tras brgyan ni yod

<sup>5</sup>ri mo pa tra brka shis rtags brgyad 'dzoms yod

<sup>6</sup>bkra shis rtags brgyad bkra la shis pa shog shog

<sup>7</sup>bkra shis rtags brgyad bkra la shis pa shog shog

<sup>1</sup> Dekyi Tsering (b. 1988) from Yul shul Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho shgon Province (<http://goo.gl/OrT48x>, accessed 10 June 2016).

<sup>2</sup> *Yar ston* is what local people call the song and was the term used when I and other local children sang it. However, those I consulted were unable to explain this term in the context of the song to my satisfaction. Therefore, I have chosen to use *yar bstod* in the poetic literary text.

## Literary Poetic Text

<sup>1</sup>ཡར་བསྟོད་ཡར་བསྟོད་གསེར་གྱི་རི་ལ་ཡར་བསྟོད།  
<sup>2</sup>མར་འབབ་མར་འབབ་ཚུ་བོའི་གཞུང་ལ་མར་འབབ།  
<sup>3</sup>ཚུ་བོའི་གཞུང་ལ་གསེར་ཟམ་དགུ་འགྲིག་འཛོམས་ཡོད།  
<sup>4</sup>གསེར་ཟམ་དགུ་འགྲིག་རི་མོ་པ་ཏྲ་ས་བརྒྱན་ཡོད།  
<sup>5</sup>རི་མོ་པ་ཏྲ་བྲ་ཤེས་རྟགས་བརྒྱན་འཛོམས་ཡོད།  
<sup>6</sup>བྲ་ཤེས་རྟགས་བརྒྱན་བྲ་ལ་ཤེས་པ་ཤོག་ཤོག།  
<sup>7</sup>བྲ་ཤེས་རྟགས་བརྒྱན་བྲ་ལ་ཤེས་པ་ཤོག་ཤོག།

<sup>1</sup>yar bstod yar bstod gser gyi ri la yar bstod  
<sup>2</sup>mar 'bab mar 'bab chu bo'i gzhung la mar 'bab  
<sup>3</sup>chu bo'i gzhung la gser zam dgu 'grig 'dzoms yod  
<sup>4</sup>gser zam dgu 'grig ri mo pa tras brgyan yod  
<sup>5</sup>ri mo pa tra brka shis rtags brgyad 'dzoms yod  
<sup>6</sup>bkra shis rtags brgyad bkra la shis pa shog shog  
<sup>7</sup>bkra shis rtags brgyad bkra la shis pa shog shog

<sup>1</sup>Praise, praise, praise to the golden mountain up there  
<sup>2</sup>Descend, descend, descend to mid-river  
<sup>3</sup>A well-matched gold bridge crosses the river  
<sup>4</sup>Well-matched gold bridge is adorned with Pa tra figures  
<sup>5</sup>Pa tra figures adorned with the Eight Auspicious Symbols  
<sup>6</sup>May auspiciousness arise from the Eight Auspicious Symbols  
<sup>7</sup>May auspiciousness arise from the Eight Auspicious Symbols

During the Lo sar period in the early years of this century, there was a singing party in my home with members of my extended family. I was with my cousin, Phun tshogs dbang rgyal<sup>1</sup> (b. 1993), eating some oranges, when a woman began singing. She had a beautiful voice. My cousin, Gdugs dkar skyid, (b. 1990), told me my mother was singing. It was the first time I had heard her sing and I have not heard her sing since. Later, when I asked her, she said it was a song by 'Jigs byid 'tsho.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> We have the same name.

<sup>2</sup> A singer from Bla brang (Xiahe), Gan lho (Gannan), Gansu Province.



The locals I asked were unable to explain the origin of *dmangs glu* other than, "They have been passed down from our ancestors!" The subject of these songs can be almost anything except romance. Local *dmangs glu* feature lower tones at the beginning, very high tones in the middle of each stanza; and slow, relaxed, and long, drawn-out sounds at the end. They generally feature two to three stanzas. Local *dmangs glu* feature lyrics that can be improvised and singers add more or fewer vocables as they think appropriate. *Dmangs glu* are so flexible that singers might rest for about thirty seconds after a few lines, have a shot of liquor or a sip of milk tea, and then continue singing.

The *dmang glu* entitled *A long la mo* that I include in this paper is a good example of how this type of song can be sung for a longer or shorter period. I performed it within three to five minutes, depending on where I sang it and who was listening. While herding my family's ninety yaks, I sang it at my highest register, added vocables, and prolonged the sounds in the song. I truly enjoyed singing while herding in summer on the beautiful grassland ornamented with various, colorful flowers. If I sang high enough, the sound would echo from the rock mountains.

In contrast, when I sang it in front of many local people, and especially if locals were present, I felt nervous because some of those listening sang better than me. This meant that my performance was shorter than when I performed it while herding in valleys and on the mountains.

I never performed *la gzhas*. Brother told me that when he and 'Jigs byed skyabs drove their yaks to the top of Gser nya 'Golden Fish',<sup>1</sup> young women from Mgo log also drove their yaks there and then they sang *la gzhas*. However, I never heard a local person sing *la gzhas*, illustrating how a few years can make a great deal of difference in local performance. The only *la gzhas* that I heard as a child were from *la gzhas* DVDs that I watched and listened to in my aunts' homes when female family members were absent.

*Rdung len*, a term that translates as 'strumming and singing', are "performed with the musical accompaniment of a traditional

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<sup>1</sup> A valley in my family's summer pasture.

Tibetan guitar (*sgra snyan*) or mandolin" (Lama Jabb 2015:30). Dbal mgon (b. 1948)<sup>1</sup> popularized *rdung len* beginning with a performance broadcast by the Mtsho sngon Tibetan Broadcast Station in late 1979 and in "a year his music was played also by radio stations in Gansu, Sichuan, Lhasa and Inner Mongolia," which was soon followed by cassette tapes of his music (Savolainen nd).<sup>2</sup> *Rdung len* features verses of lyrics that are:

characterized by brevity, a first-person speaker, plain speech, poetic figures and the passionate expression of subjective thoughts and emotions. They are mostly short, simple, and expressive metrical compositions that employ a mix of vernacular and literary idioms. This poeticity combined with the musical element widens the reach...as a vehicle of personal expression... (Lama Jabb 2015:31).

*Rdung len* were the most popular songs in Gtsang lha sde in 2016.<sup>3</sup>

When I was in primary school grade four, I sang *A khu pad+ma* in front of about thirty students who were practicing a dance performance for Children's Day. *A khu pad+ma* was a locally well-known *rdung len* created by Dbal mgon. Many locals sing various versions of this song, which were also performed by Nyi ma rol tshongs 'Sun Band'<sup>4</sup> and Rig 'dzin sgrol ma (Rigzin Drolma), among others.

Every winter holiday during Lo sar, my cousin, Bkra shis don 'grub (b. 1987), sang, bringing tears to the eyes of local elders due to the piercing clarity of his voice. The reach of his songs was such that

<sup>1</sup> <https://goo.gl/TaWrBp>, accessed 10 August 2016.

<sup>2</sup> See Savolainen (nd) for photographs of Dbal mgon with his students, at home, and while performing.

<sup>3</sup> See Sangs rgyas bkra shis et al. (2015) for a study of A mdo Tibetan songs, including *rdung len*, with music notation focused on Gcan tsha thang, a pastoral community in Gcan tsha thang (Jianzhatan) Township, Gcan tsha (Jianzha) County, Rma lho Prefecture. For a more general description of A mdo songs, see Anton-Luca (2012).

<sup>4</sup> The main singer was Pad ma bsam grub (Pema Samdrup), the drummer was Mgon po dbang rgyal (Gonpo Wanggyal), and the guitarist was Stag lha tshe ring (Thaghlha Tsering) (<http://goo.gl/wjhois>, accessed 10 August 2016).

when he sang in Srib lung Valley<sup>1</sup> while herding, we heard the singing at home on the other side of the river. I heard this song first from him and vividly recall him singing it. I never performed this song - *A long la mo* - in Rma lho County, but I did perform it several times in Xi'an City from 2014 to 2016. This included two or three times in my dormitory room at Xi'an Translation University when a Chinese student asked me to sing a Tibetan traditional song. He said he wanted to hear what such a song sounded like, and added that he thought every Tibetan could sing well. I also performed this song at parties when Tibetans were present and we took turns singing.

A long la mo

## Song Text as Performed

1 ཨོྭ་ཤེ་ཤི་ཤེ་ ཨོ་ཤོང་ཤོ་ བཟོ་ཤོན།  
 2 ཨོྭ་རྩྭ་ ཡང་ཤོང་ཤོ་ ཅ་རྒྱལ་གཅིག་རྩྭ་ཨོྭ་ཤེ་ཤི་ཤོ་  
 3 ཨོྭ་རྩྭ་ལ་ཤེ་ཤི་ཤེ་ རྩྭ་ཤིག་ཤོ་ ཤེ་ཤི་རེ་ག་ཤི།  
 4 ཨོྭ་རྩྭ་ ཨོ་ཤོང་ཤོ་ བཟོ་ཤོན་ཨོྭ་ཤེ་ཤི་ཤོ་  
 5 ཨོྭ་རྩྭ་རྩྭ་ཤིག་ཤེ་ རྩྭ་རྩྭ་ཤོ་ ཅུ་ཤོ་རེ་ག་ཤེ།  
 6 ཨོྭ་རྩྭ་ ཨོ་ཤོང་ཤོ་ བཟོ་ཤོན་ཨོྭ་ཤེ་ཤི་ཤོ་

7 ཞེ་ཡོ་ཡི་ཡོ་ཞེ་མོང་མོ་ལོ་མོ་མོ་ལོ།  
8 ཞེ་རྩོ་ཡང་མོང་མོ་རྩལ་མཆིག་ཅེན་ཞེ་ཡོ་ཡི་རྩོ་  
9 ཞེ་རྩོ་ངས་ཁྱི་ཡོ་ཡོ་ཡི་ཡོ་སྒྲ་ཅིག་མོ་ཡོང་ཁྱི་རིམ་ན་ཡོ།  
10 ཞེ་རྩོ་ཞེ་མོང་མོ་ལོ་མོ་ལོ་ཞེ་ཡོ་ཡི་རྩོ་  
11 ཞེ་རྩོ་ངས་དཔལ་ཅིག་ཡོ་ལོ་རྩོ་རྩོ་མོ་རིམ་རྩོ།  
12 ཞེ་རྩོ་ཞེ་མོང་མོ་ལོ་མོ་ལོ་ཞེ་ཡོ་ཡི་རྩོ་ཡོ།

<sup>1</sup>o ye yi ye a long lo la mo len  
<sup>2</sup>o ho yang long lo na zlas gcig nyon o ye yi go  
<sup>3</sup>o ho nga skyi la ye ye yi ye rta zig lo yo kyi res na ye  
<sup>4</sup>o ho a long lo la mo len o ye yi go  
<sup>5</sup>o ho ngas da sga zig ye stod rgyo lo rtsa mo res re  
<sup>6</sup>o ho a long lo la mo len o ye yi go

<sup>1</sup> Srib lung 'Shady Valley' refers to Bkra shis don 'grub's family's valley.

<sup>7</sup>o ye yi ye a long lo la mo len  
<sup>8</sup>o ho yang long lo na zlas gcig nyon o ye yi go  
<sup>9</sup>o ho nga da skyi la ye ye yi ye skad tsig lo yod kyi res na ye  
<sup>10</sup>o ho a long lo la mo len o ye yi go  
<sup>11</sup>o ho ngas da glu zig ye len rgyo lo rtsa mo res re  
<sup>12</sup>o ho a long lo la mo len o ye yi go ye

### Literary Poetic Text

<sup>1</sup>ཨ་མོ་ལ་མོ་ལེན།  
<sup>2</sup>ཡང་མོ་ལ་མོ་ལེན།  
<sup>3</sup>ང་སྟེང་ལ་སྟེང་ཞིག་ཡོད་ཀྱི་ན།  
<sup>4</sup>ངས་སྟེང་ཞིག་ལེན་ཀྱི་སྟེང་ལོ།

<sup>5</sup>ཨ་མོ་ལ་མོ་ལེན།  
<sup>6</sup>ཡང་མོ་ལ་མོ་ལེན།  
<sup>7</sup>ང་སྟེང་ལ་སྟེང་ཞིག་ཡོད་ཀྱི་ན།  
<sup>8</sup>ངས་སྟེང་ཞིག་ལེན་ཀྱི་སྟེང་ལོ།

<sup>1</sup>a long la mo len  
<sup>2</sup>yang long na zlas nyon  
<sup>3</sup>nga skyid la rta zhig yod rgyu na  
<sup>4</sup>ngas sga zhig bstod rgyu sla mo red

<sup>5</sup>a long la mo len  
<sup>6</sup>yang long na zlas nyon  
<sup>7</sup>nga skyid la skad zhig yod rgyu na  
<sup>8</sup>ngas glu zhig len rgyu sla mo red

<sup>1</sup>(I) sing, a long la mo  
<sup>2</sup>(Please) listen, my yang long peers  
<sup>3</sup>If I have a gentle horse  
<sup>4</sup>It is much easier to saddle it

<sup>5</sup>(I) sing, *a long la mo*

<sup>6</sup>(Please) listen, my *yang long* peers

<sup>7</sup>If I have a good voice

<sup>8</sup>It is much easier to sing

During a sports meeting during the time I was attending Rma lho County Nationalities Middle School,<sup>1</sup> my roommate (b. 1993)<sup>2</sup> sang *Rta rkyang dmar 'Chestnut Horse'* (lyrics and musical notation given later), which was the first time I had heard it. He said it was a traditional A rig song. In 2014 when I was collecting examples of folk culture in the Gtsang a rig area, I visited a local singer and asked him to sing. He sang *Chestnut Horse*, which I then learned. I was attracted to this song because I wanted to be able to sing a song that reflected my identity as a member of the A rig Tribe and thus be prepared when I was asked to sing a song reflective of my home place.<sup>3</sup>

In about 2004, solar energy powered a small black-and-white TV in Dmag pa tshang. They owned some Chinese martial arts VCDs. Every time Brother, Sister, and I heard VCDs playing, we ran there to watch them. This meant that Brother drove the yaks home late and my neglect meant that the yak calves nursed their mothers so there was little milk. Mother then scolded us.

Until about 2010, people did not own mobile phones in Lha sde and in 2016, the only electricity in Lha sde was provided by solar panels and gasoline powered generators owned and operated by individual households.

In terms of song-sharing and listening to music, people in my extended family would record our songs with a battery-powered tape recorder and this is how we listened to music in about 2005. Singers in A mdo area published their tape albums and we bought them to

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<sup>1</sup> This school consisted of only junior middle school classes. I attended this school from 2009 to 2011. In 2016, there had never been a senior middle school in Rma lho County.

<sup>2</sup> I do not remember his name.

<sup>3</sup> My sense that this song reflected A rig identity was reinforced by my maternal grandmother telling me only A rig people sang this song.

listen. Brother kept a mid-size, battery-powered tape player that used three batteries. It also was an audio recorder.

### SINGING IN SENIOR MIDDLE SCHOOL

When I was in senior middle school, I learned some Chinese songs, for example, I could sing Tonghua 'Fairy Tale' by the Malaysian Chinese singer, Wang Guangliang (b. 1970).<sup>1</sup> I also listened to songs by such performers as Michael Jackson and Justin Bieber. However, most of the songs I learned and sang during the time I was in senior middle school were *deng gzhas*.

The nine boys in my senior middle school class shared one dormitory room. We sang many songs popularized by Gyu 'brug tshan sdeb 'Turquoise Dragon Band', a Tibetan boy band,<sup>2</sup> including Bye'u 'Baby Birds', Gyes kha ma' glu 'Separation Song', Snying nyi snying nyi 'Dear, Dear', Mi rabs gsar ba 'New Generation' and other songs all originally performed by Gyu 'brug tshan sdeb.

### LO SAR PARTIES IN 2016

At about nine AM on the first day of the Lunar New Year (8 February 2016), I walked for about seven minutes from my home to the home of my good friend, Do kho (Mgon po 'don grub, b. 1993). I wore a red Tibetan shirt under my father's dark blue lambskin robe, a pair of KAMA jeans, and narrow, leather boots that reached my knees. I brought gifts in a bag - a white *kha btags*, some apples brought from Zi ling by my uncle who had told me, "These are very good apples from Xinjiang."<sup>3</sup> I also brought a *zhun*<sup>4</sup> 'Tibetan cake'.

<sup>1</sup> <http://goo.gl/aXlPYp>, accessed 20 September 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Gyu 'brug tshan sdeb had four members: Tshul khrim, Gnam chen, 'Jam dbal, and Bkra shis. 'Jam dbal left the band in 2014 after release of the album *Gyes kha ma' glu 'Separation Song*'.

<sup>3</sup> Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.

<sup>4</sup> This *zhun* was made of powdered wild sweet potatoes, dried cheese, barley

When I neared my friend's home, he and his parents came out of the house and welcomed, "*Lo sar bzang!* 'Happy New Year'" with sincere, happy expressions.

I replied, "*Lo sar bzang! Lo sar bzang!*"

They enthusiastically ushered me into a room with a metal stove in the center. Nearby sat a plastic bag with dried yak dung for fuel. A big bed was in one corner near a sofa and three armchairs that were positioned around a wooden table with yak meat and mutton, Tibetan cakes, fried bread, and fruits on large plates. Candy and watermelon seeds were on smaller plates. Various beverages and fruit juices were also on the table.

I sat on the sofa. Do kho's mother immediately offered me a bowl of yak-milk tea in a bowl decorated with the Eight Auspicious Symbols and said, "It is very nice that you visit our home."

Do kho stood, scrutinizing my special clothing as I gazed at his sheepskin robe that the three men of his family wore occasionally during festivals. The robe fit Do kho the best. His father sat in an armchair near the stove and said, "Please eat what you like."

"*O ya* 'Yes'," I said politely.

"Today is a good day so why don't you young people sing and have fun?" he continued.

Realizing that he was asking me to sing, I said, "If you want me to sing, you should first sing a song to ask me to sing."<sup>1</sup>

"I'm older than you, so I don't need to do that, but I sang well when I was your age," he bantered. "Today is such an auspicious day, please sing!" he said.

"OK, I'm not a good singer but, as you want me to sing, I will," I said.

They applauded and I sang *Chestnut Horse*.

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flour, white sugar, dark sugar, and ghee, which were combined in a pot, heated, and constantly stirred. A clean basin was rinsed with cold water. Once the ingredients were deemed to have mixed together sufficiently, the *zhun* mixture was poured into the basin. After some hours it congealed.

<sup>1</sup> Traditionally, the person who asks guests to sing does so in song.

རྟ་རྟམ་དམར། Rta rkyang dmar

## Song Text as Performed

[illegible]

<sup>1</sup>o ye ye yi ye rta rkyang dmar  
<sup>2</sup>o ye gser gi da ye ye gdong srab o ye ca go  
<sup>3</sup>o dgung nyi zla o ye nyi ga'i lo ci pa o ye yi re go  
  
<sup>4</sup>o ye yi ye shwa jo skya  
<sup>5</sup>o ye dung gi lo ru thur o ye can go  
<sup>6</sup>shar 'u rma rgyal o ye sbom ra'i lo tshe thar o ye yi re go  
  
<sup>7</sup>o ye yi ye bu smug go  
<sup>8</sup>o ye dung gi lo so sgo o ye ca go  
<sup>9</sup>yul o ha ma o ye nyi ga'i lo sems rten o ye yi re go

## Literary Poetic Text

<sup>1</sup> རྒྱུད་པ་ལ་མེད་ཀྱི་ལོ་རྒྱུད་ཅན་ཅེས།  
<sup>2</sup> དཔུང་ཞིང་ལ་ཞིས་ཀྱི་མིང་ལ་འདྲ།  
<sup>3</sup> ལོ་རྒྱུད་ཀྱི་ལོ་རྒྱུད་ཅན་ཅེས།  
<sup>4</sup> ལོ་རྒྱུད་ཀྱི་ལོ་རྒྱུད་ཅན་ཅེས།



<sup>5</sup>བུ་སྐྱུ་ག་པོ་དང་གི་སྐྱོ་ཅན།  
<sup>6</sup>ཡུལ་པ་མ་གཉིས་ཀྱི་སེམས་རྟོན་རེད།

<sup>1</sup>rtā rkyang dmar gser gyi gdong srab can

<sup>2</sup>dgung nyi zla gnyis kyi chibs pa red

<sup>3</sup>shwa jo skya dung gi ru thur can

<sup>4</sup>shar rma rgyal sbom ra'i tshe thar red

<sup>5</sup>bu smug po dung gi so sgo can

<sup>6</sup>yul pha ma gnyis kyi sems rten red

<sup>1</sup>Chestnut horse with a golden bridle

<sup>2</sup>It is the horse of the sun and the moon

<sup>3</sup>Light gray stag with white antlers

<sup>4</sup>It is the animal of East Rma rgyal sbom ra<sup>1</sup>

<sup>5</sup>The dark-brown son with white teeth

<sup>6</sup>He is his parents' beloved child

Do kho surely had something humorous to say about my singing, given his big smile. I knew he was struggling not to make a joke at my expense. However, the auspiciousness of the day meant that he remained silent.

There were five people in Do kho's home; too few for a singing party, so I went home after about two hours. If more people had been there, I am sure that there would have been a singing party and I would not have been allowed to leave.

On the fifth day of Losar (13 February 2016), my community member, Rta te (Rta mgrin skyabs, b. 1973) held a wedding ceremony at his home. The day before, Dba' chen (b. 1993), my former classmate at Rma lho County Nationalities Middle School located in Yul rgan nyin, came to my home driving a Geely car that his father had bought

<sup>1</sup> A mye rma chen, Amnyi machen.

for Dba' chen's younger brother so that he could learn to drive. Dba' chen said he would attend the wedding festivities, which would also feature a party. I decided to go, too. Mother prepared a *skon* 'piece of satin often used to make clothing' and a *ske rags* 'sash'. These two items were locally given to families holding a wedding ceremony. Mother also prepared a case of Gyu mdog gang chab 'Sprite'.

I put the gifts in the trunk of Dba' chen's car, got in the front seat, and we then set out for Rta te's home. It was about four-thirty PM. En route, we crossed the new Yellow River Bridge and sped over gravel roads and two mountains. We reached our destination at approximately six PM. I presented the gifts to Rta te, who said he was very glad that we had come to the wedding. He escorted us inside a thirty-square-meter white tent that he had received from the government in 2013. He offered each of us milk tea in a disposable cup and a small plate of *khon*.<sup>1</sup>

"Please eat!" he said.

Dba' chen and I nodded. After I mentioned the party, he said, "You can have a party tonight at our home,<sup>2</sup> but I probably can't attend because I have to prepare for the wedding."

"OK, then let's see how many people come," I answered.

At eight PM, Rta te's wife (b. ~1965) and four young women cooked *then thug* in a large pot and then about thirteen of us had supper. There were also plates of *khon* 'steamed dumplings', *pa li* 'fried meat pie', and *ja dkar po*<sup>3</sup> 'milk tea'. Those present included seven guests from the Gser gzhung and Sha la communities, who were initially somewhat reserved. However, after eating, everyone was very sociable, making jokes, playing cards, and chatting.

Part of one room in Rta te's home was a shop where this family sold drinks, snacks, cards, bottles of gasoline,<sup>4</sup> and other necessities.

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<sup>1</sup> Steamed, meat-stuffed dumplings are also known as *tshod ma* and *mog mog*.

<sup>2</sup> Locals say 'our home' instead of 'my home' to friends who visit.

<sup>3</sup> *Ja dkar po* 'white tea' refers to yak milk tea.

<sup>4</sup> Empty Coca-Cola and Sprite bottles with a capacity of 1.5 liters were typically refilled with gasoline and sold to those who wish to refuel their automobiles and motorcycles. In 2016, one bottle sold for twenty-five RMB.

We bought several decks of cards there and then played cards after dividing into three groups, with each group having four people further divided into two, two-member teams. Those not included in these groups waited to replace losing teams. The winning team beat the two members of the losing team by holding their right index and middle fingers together and beating the losers' forearms one time, which is called *tsi pa*<sup>1</sup> locally. Two other players then replaced the two losers. Rta te had told me earlier that many young people would come and then we would have a party, but few came. We began playing cards at about nine PM after supper, and continued until 5:45 AM the next day.

Seven guests were arranged to sleep in the tent. I was exhausted and went to bed with 'Jam dbal (b. 1990), my former primary school classmate who was Rta te's neighbor.

At ten AM on the wedding day, Rta te woke us and said that we needed to greet the bride's escorts and welcome them into the room that had been prepared for them, so I got up. 'Jam dbal did not. He stayed in bed until about one PM.

The groom and fifteen escorts arrived at ten-thirty AM. We greeted them in the room that we had prepared and offered them *rtsam pa* first, followed by rice with *gro ma* 'wild sweet potatoes' topped with sugar and melted butter. We played finger games with the escorts in an effort to get them to drink more and thus be high-spirited and happy.

Two players started the game by making a fist and then pointing their hands at each other with the thumb held up. The next time each player retracted their fist so it was near their face, with all the fingers inside the fist. Each player then said, "*Bzang!*" and pointed any finger they wished - but only one finger - at the other player. The thumb beat the index finger, which beat the middle finger, which beat the ring finger, which beat the little finger, which beat the thumb, which beat the index finger. If the pointed fingers were not in sequence, then no one won and the game continued. This game is also called *bzang*.

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<sup>1</sup> Although not done during this party, other punishments include putting soot and toothpaste on a loser's face.

Typically, the loser drinks a cup of beverage that might contain alcohol (spirits or beer) or, if the loser does not drink alcohol, then they might drink a carbonated beverage. The loser might also eat a piece of fruit, dumpling, or a small bowl of yogurt.

Those who refused to drink alcohol were offered Coca-Cola, Sprite, and fruit juices.

Finally, we offered the groom and his escorts small bowls of yak-milk yogurt. They had already been offered yogurt so this was not intended to satisfy hunger, rather, it signaled an end to the wedding, which was understood. Some immediately stood and left.

There was no singing at all during the wedding and only a few sentences of wedding orations were spoken. I was disappointed, because I thought weddings in Lha sde would ideally feature a lot of singing and many speeches.

At about eleven-forty AM, the groom's escorts left. The wedding was finished. The bride helped her family do housework.

I asked Rta te if there would be a singing party that night. He replied, "We are going to have a party tonight and have fun!"

That night at around eight PM, thirty or so people gathered. Most were young men. Some chatted, some played a game with sheep anklebones, others played cards, and some drank beer.<sup>1</sup>

There was a lot of laughter.

Two hours later, Rta te and Rab brtan (b. 1986) organized a competition of cards and eventually, my primary school classmate, Gdugs dkar tshe ring (b. 1995), was rewarded with a blanket.

After the card competition, I suggested singing, but I was generally ignored. Some guests went home.

Later, Rab brtan organized another game. The people were put into two groups and then two leaders were chosen to hide a string of prayer beads. The other group had to guess who was hiding it.

Our game started with group *ka* (A) and group *kha* (B). I was in group A. Soon our group correctly guessed who was hiding the

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<sup>1</sup> Drinking in front of elders was deemed disrespectful. When elders entered the room, youths quickly concealed their drinks.

prayer beads in the other group. A person from group *kha* then had to sing a song. I hoped someone would sing a traditional song, but the others urged an eleven-year-old girl to perform. She sang a Chinese children's song. When she finished, everyone applauded.

When it was my group's turn to sing, I was urged to sing an English song. I am unable to sing well in English and I also felt uncomfortable singing in English to people who understood no English. Consequently, I sang a rap song - *A pha 'Father'* originally sung by Bde skyid tshe ring.

During the New Year of 2016, I heard not one *dmangs glu*, nor a single *rdung len*. Furthermore, locals' enthusiasm for singing parties had been replaced by an interest in card parties and listening and posting *rdung len* on such smart phone apps as Skad 'phrin (WeChat, Weixin),<sup>1</sup> Changba,<sup>2</sup> and PaPa.<sup>3</sup>

## CONCLUSION

This paper has focused on my experiences and relatives' memories that relate to the Lha sde gong ma Community, Gtsang a rig Township, Rma lho Mongolian Autonomous County, Rma lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon China. I have paid particular attention to

<sup>1</sup> WeChat, or Weixin in Chinese, is a popular messaging app, particularly in China. Developed by Tencent in 2011, it currently has nearly 700 million users (<http://goo.gl/K6iWmj>, accessed 10 June 2016).

<sup>2</sup> Founded by Chen Hua, Changba is a smart phone app that provides users with a portable KTV booth. Users may upload their own creations, browse others' songs and comment, and send virtual flowers to express appreciation. Changba also features sound mixers and echo effects (<https://goo.gl/c4yv1B>, accessed 10 June 2016). For more, see <http://changba.com/> (accessed 10 June 2016).

<sup>3</sup> PaPa is a social app fusing videos, photos, and other elements of Path, Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter, and Weibo all into one. Sending voice messages of up to sixty seconds, it can integrate with Chinese social networks. Launched on 8 October 2012 as an iPhone app from the PaPa.me homepage, it had a twenty million user base within a year (<https://goo.gl/Ll7ykr>, accessed 10 June 2016).

place, local history, ritual, parties, and songs (including three with musical notation). Rapid change from a traditional herding lifestyle to settlement in permanent housing, how local Tibetan identity was maintained through tribal rituals, and dramatic changes in the local songscape are evident, based on my personal experiences.

More specifically, I have provided particulars of the recent history of Gtsang lha sde, Zam kha, and the Gtsang a rig; the Spyi srung Ritual; my extended family; and my involvement with singing and song parties at my home, in senior middle school, and during Tibetan New Year parties in 2016.

Despite being separated for five decades, Lha sde gong ma residents in Rma lho Prefecture (who are classified as Mongolian) and Lha sde zhol ma residents living in Mgo log Prefecture (who are classified as Tibetan) maintained a very strong sense of common identity as Gtsang lha sde in 2016, although there was no place officially named Gtsang lha sde. People who identified as Gtsang lha sde said they were Tibetan.

In 2016, locals were using smart phones that displayed Tibetan. These new forms of technology meant that their engagement with oral Tibetan literature (storytelling, songs, orations, riddles, jokes, and so on) was not what it was historically, as they increasingly used phone apps and internet access to interact with each other.<sup>1</sup> How locals will communicate and interrelate with each other and the larger Tibetan community in the future is difficult to predict, given the rapid introduction of new forms of technology.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, my home was connected to the Internet in 2016 through China Telecom at no charge for a year. In addition, a smart phone was provided for free.

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PHOTOGRAPHS

Figure 2. Zam kha in 2003. Horses and yaks were utilized for transportation. The wooden bridge built in 1983 stretches across the Yellow River in the center of this picture (2003, Dngos grub).



Figure 3. In 2016, Zam kha had various small shops and a dirt road that saw a great deal of traffic, facilitated by a new bridge across the Yellow River (left center). Horses and yaks were rarely used for transportation (2016, Phun tshogs dbang rgyal).





Figure 4. Golden Fish Valley. The ridge in the background is where my cousins and brother sang *la gzhas* with other women. I was born on the ridge in the foreground where my mother was living in a black yak hair tent. More precisely, I was born when she had gone outside to milk yaks near the tent (2015, Phun tshogs dbang rgyal).



Figure 5. Bkra do's home. My family and Grandmother lived here before land division (2014, Phun tshogs dbang rgyal).<sup>1</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> My cousin.



Figure 6. A road built in about 2014 on the Happy Plain of Dbu ma (2015, Phun tshogs dbang rgyal).



Figure 7. The home where I lived before moving to Zam kha in 2007 (2015, Phun tshogs dbang rgyal).



Figure 8. A Gtsang lha sde resident poses with an award for his performance during the proverb competition during the Gtsang lha sde spyi srung Ritual on the Happy Plain of Dbu ma (2015, Phun tshogs dbang rgyal).



Figure 9. The Yellow River wooden bridge built in 1983 in Zam kha (2016, Phun tshogs dbang rgyal).



Figure 10. The black yak-hair tent for cooking during the Gtsang lha sde spyi srung Ritual on the Happy Plain of Dbu ma in Lha sde gong ma. The stone building with flat stones inscribed with scriptures was under construction (2015, Phun tshogs dbang rgyal).



#### APPENDIX: MUSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

In November 2016, I (Qi Huimin)<sup>1</sup> communicated with Phun tshogs dbang rgyal via Skype. I asked about where, when, and how he learned the songs that he sang, and recordings of which are featured at <https://goo.gl/rKZKSC>.<sup>2</sup> I also asked about the environment that gives birth to these songs and so on.

Differences in the way the songs recorded in this paper are performed may be due to the singer's individual style of performance and variations in the lyrics. For example, the phrases in *Yar bstod* demonstrate slight alteration when different lyrics appear, as shown below:

<sup>1</sup> Qi Huimin wrote the music notation in this paper.

<sup>2</sup> Accessed 12 November 2016.



*Yar bstod* was a song popular with children and a wider, more general audience, owing to its clear rhythm, simplicity, and because it did not demand extraordinary vocal skills.

*Rta rkyang dmar* and *A long la mo* are both free rhythm songs and share similar musical structures. *Rta rkyang dmar* has three stanzas. In terms of musical characteristics, the second and third stanzas are very similar to the first stanza. There are three phrases in the first stanza of *Rta rkyang dmar* with vocables comprising the first phrase. The second phrase is divided into three parts. The first consists of vocables, the second features Tibetan lyrics, and the third is made up of vocables that constitute a cadence. In essence, the second phrase is introduced by vocables, and the phrase ends in a cadence of vocables. The third phrase consists of Tibetan lyrics with the cadence comprised of vocables. Below is the cadence:



Notation for *Rta rkyang dmar* follows.

རྟ་ཁྱེད་དམར།

sung by Phun tshogs dbang rgyal

transcribed by Qi Huimin

2 ཁྱེད་ ཁྱེད་ ཁྱེད་ ཁྱེད་ ཁྱེད་ ཁྱེད་

3 ཁྱེད་ ཁྱེད་ ཁྱེད་ ཁྱེད་ ཁྱེད་ ཁྱེད་

4 ཁྱེད་ ཁྱེད་ ཁྱེད་ ཁྱེད་ ཁྱེད་ ཁྱེད་

5 ཁྱེད་ ཁྱེད་ ཁྱེད་ ཁྱེད་ ཁྱེད་ ཁྱེད་

6 ཁྱེད་ ཁྱེད་ ཁྱེད་ ཁྱེད་ ཁྱེད་ ཁྱེད་

*A long la mo* has two stanzas of lyrics and bears close similarity to *Rta rkyang dmar*. The first phrase consists of vocables. The beginning vocables lead to the second phrase, a short cadence appears at the end of the second phrase, and so on. In *A long la mo*, the first stanza features six lines of lyrics that are divided into three music stanzas. One stanza of music is completed by two lines. One line is a phrase of vocables. The second line consists of Tibetan lyrics with a cadence of vocables. The cadence for *A long la mo* is shown below:

Comparing the first vocables phrase of each stanza in *A long la mo*, the other two stanzas' vocables phrases are almost the same, except in the beginning where there is a difference of about five beats

as shown below:



Notation for *A long la mo* follows:

ཨ་ལོང་ལ་མོ།

sung by Phun tshogs dbang rgyal

transcribed by Qi Huimin



19 Ave Maria, Virgo Immaculata, qui tollis omnia peccata mundi, miserere nobis.

22 Ave Maria, Virgo Immaculata, qui tollis omnia peccata mundi, miserere nobis.

25 Ave Maria, Virgo Immaculata, qui tollis omnia peccata mundi, miserere nobis.

28 Ave Maria, Virgo Immaculata, qui tollis omnia peccata mundi, miserere nobis.

31 Ave Maria, Virgo Immaculata, qui tollis omnia peccata mundi, miserere nobis.

34 Ave Maria, Virgo Immaculata, qui tollis omnia peccata mundi, miserere nobis.

37 Ave Maria, Virgo Immaculata, qui tollis omnia peccata mundi, miserere nobis.

40 Ave Maria, Virgo Immaculata, qui tollis omnia peccata mundi, miserere nobis.

43 Ave Maria, Virgo Immaculata, qui tollis omnia peccata mundi, miserere nobis.

46 Ave Maria, Virgo Immaculata, qui tollis omnia peccata mundi, miserere nobis.

## CONCLUSION

Notations may be used to indicate free rhythm (signature marked by ♪) and free extended notes (◡). Tibetan folk songs may be transcribed in this way, however, how many meters should the free extended note be sung and what is the singing style of the song?



Singers of traditional songs can answer these questions. For this and many other reasons, they should be encouraged and the environment that gives birth to these songs should be protected.

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<sup>1</sup> This might also be written གནས་མཚོག་བྱིན་ཅན།

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## NON-ENGLISH TERMS

'ba' rdzong འབའ་རྫོང་།  
 'brug lung འབྲུག་ལུང་།  
 'du khang འདུ་ཁང་།  
 'jam dbal འཇམ་དཔལ་།  
 'jigs byed skyabs འཇིགས་བྱེད་སྐྱབས་།  
 'jigs byid 'tsho འཇིགས་བྱེད་འཚོ།  
 'obs thung འོབས་ཐུང་།  
 'then thug འཐེན་ཐུག་།  
 a bo ཨ་བོ།  
 a bo tshang ཨ་བོ་ཚང་།  
 a dkon mchog chos 'phel ཨ་དཀོན་མཆོག་ཆོས་འཕེལ་།  
 a ga ཨ་ག།  
 a khu pad+ma ཨ་ཁུ་པད་མ།  
 a mdo ཨ་མདོ།  
 a mye rma chen ཨ་མྱེ་མ་ཆེན་།  
 a pha ཨ་པ།  
 a rig ཨ་རིག་།  
 bde ldan བདེ་ལྷན་།  
 bde skyid བདེ་སྦྱིད་།  
 bde skyid tshe ring བདེ་སྦྱིད་ཆེ་རིང་།  
 bkra do བརྒྱ་དོ།  
 bkra do tshang བརྒྱ་དོ་ཚང་།  
 bkra mtsho བརྒྱ་མཚོ།  
 bkra shis བརྒྱ་ཤིས་།  
 bkra shis don 'grub བརྒྱ་ཤིས་དོན་འགྲུབ་།  
 bkra shis mtsho བརྒྱ་ཤིས་མཚོ།  
 bla brang བླ་བར་།  
 bla ma བླ་མ།  
 blo bsod བློ་བསྐྱེད་།  
 blo bzang bsod nams བློ་བཟང་བསྐྱེད་ནམས་།  
 bu ram ཐུ་རམ།  
 bod བོད་།  
 bsang བསང་།

bsang khri བསང་ཁྲི།  
 bsang khug བསང་ཁུག།  
 bsang rtsi བསང་རྩི།  
 bskal bzang sgrol ma བསྐལ་བཟང་སྒོལ་མ།  
 btsan po'i pho nya བཙན་པོའི་ཕོ་ལྷ།  
 bye'u བྱེ་ལུ།  
 bzang བཟང་།  
 chab ཆབ།  
 Changba 唱吧  
 Chen Hua 陈华  
 chos 'phel rgya mtsho ཆོས་འཕེལ་རྒྱ་མཚོ།  
 chu phran རྩུ་ཕྱར།  
 dar lcog དར་ལྷོག།  
 Dawu 大武  
 dpa' chen དཔ་འཆེན།  
 dpal mgon དཔལ་མགོན།  
 dbu དབུ།  
 dbu ma དབུ་མ།  
 dbu ma'i bde skyid thang དབུ་མའི་བདེ་སྦྱིད་ཐང་།  
 dbu ma'i gzhang chu དབུ་མའི་གཙང་ཆུ།  
 dbu ma'i sne'u rdza དབུ་མའི་སྡེ་ལུང་།  
 Dedan 德旦  
 deng gzhas དེང་གཞས།  
 dge bshes mig dmar 'jam dbyangs don 'grub rin po che དགེ་བཤེས་མིག་དམར་  
 འཇམ་དབྱངས་དོན་འགྲུབ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།  
 dkar mdzes དཀར་མཛེས།  
 dmag pa དམག་པ།  
 dmag pa tshang དམག་པ་ཚང་།  
 dmangs glu དམངས་གླུ།  
 dngos grub དངོས་གྲུབ།  
 dngul rwa དངུལ་རྩ།  
 do kho ཏོ་ཁོ།  
 Gannan 甘南  
 Gansu 甘肃  
 Ganzi 甘孜

Gaqun Cun 尕群村

Gaqun Muweihui 尕群牧委会

Gaqun 尕群

gcan tsha thang གཅན་ཚ་ཐང་།

gdugs dkar skyid གདུགས་དཀར་སྒྱིད་།

gdugs dkar tshe ring གདུགས་དཀར་ཚེ་རིང་།

gdugs dkar yag གདུགས་དཀར་ཡག་།

Geely, Jili 吉利

glang chen གླང་ཆེན་།

glang chen sa gshag གླང་ཆེན་ས་གཤག་།

glu shags གླུ་ཤགས་།

gnam chen གནམ་ཆེན་།

gos chen གོས་ཆེན་།

gro ma གྲོ་མ་།

gser gzhung གསེར་གཞུང་།

gser nya གསེར་ཉ་།

gser zam 'phen pa གསེར་ཟམ་འཕེན་པ་།

gtsab thug གཙབ་ཐུག་།

gtsang གཙང་།

gtsang a rig གཙང་ཨ་རིག་།

gtsang a rig spyi chen གཙང་ཨ་རིག་སྤྱི་ཆེན་།

gtsang dgon don 'grub rab brtan gling གཙང་དགོན་དོན་འབྲུབ་རབ་བརྟན་གླིང་།

gtsang lha sde གཙང་ལྷ་སྡེ་།

gtsang lha sde'i spyi srung གཙང་ལྷ་སྡེའི་སྤྱི་སྤྱང་།

gtsang pan+ti ta གཙང་པ་ཏི་ཏ་།

gtsang sde ma གཙང་སྡེ་མ་།

gtsang sgar གཙང་སྐར་།

Guoluo 果洛

g.yang 'dzin གཡང་འཛིན་།

gyes kha ma'i glu གཤམ་ཁ་མའི་གླུ་།

g.yu 'brug tshan sdeb གཡུ་འབྲུག་ཚེན་སྡེ་།

g.yu mdog gangs chab གཡུ་མདོག་གངས་ཆབ་།

g.yu rngog གཡུ་རྟོག་།

gzugs mdzes rgya mtsho གཟུགས་མཛེས་རྒྱ་མཚོ་།

Haibei 海北

Hainan 海南

Henan 河南

Huanghe yan 黄河沿

Huangnan 黄南

ja dkar po ར་དཀར་པོ།

Jianzha 尖扎

Jianzhatan 尖扎滩

ka ཀ།

ka chu ཀ་ཅུ།

kan lho ཀན་ལྷོ།

kha ཀ།

kha btags ཀ་བཏགས།

khon མོན།

kzhi rnying ཀཞི་རྟིང་།

la gzhas ལ་གཞས།

lab tse ལ་བ་ཙེ།

Lade 拉德

Lajia 拉加

Langqin 浪琴

lha sde ལྷ་སྡེ།

lha sde gong ma ལྷ་སྡེ་གོང་མ།

lha sde shog kha brgyad ལྷ་སྡེ་ཤོག་ཀ་བརྒྱཎ།

lha sde zhol ma ལྷ་སྡེ་ཞོལ་མ།

lhun 'grub ལུན་འགུབ།

Linxia 临夏

lo sar ལོ་སར།

lo sar bzang ལོ་སར་བཟང་།

ltungs bshags ལུང་བཤགས།

lus sa ལུས་ས།

ma Ni མ་ཏི།

Maqin 玛沁

Maqu 玛曲

mdo la མདོ་ལ།

mdzo mo མདོ་མོ།

me cha མེ་ཆ།

mgo log མགོ་ལོག  
 mgo pa མགོ་པ།  
 mgon po མགོན་པོ།  
 mgon po dbang rgyal མགོན་པོ་དབང་རྒྱལ།  
 mgon po don 'grub མགོན་པོ་དོན་འགྲུབ།  
 mgon po mtsho མགོན་པོ་མཚོ།  
 mi rabs gsar ba མི་རབས་གསར་བ།  
 mianpian 面片  
 mig dmar dge bshes 'jam dbyangs don 'grub rin po che མིག་དམར་དགེ་བཤེས་  
 འཇམ་དབྱངས་དོན་འགྲུབ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།  
 mjal du 'gro མཇལ་དུ་འགྲོ།  
 mngar gsum མངར་གསུམ།  
 mog mog མོག་མོག།  
 mtha' མཐའ།  
 mtha' ma མཐའ་མ།  
 mtsho byang མཚོ་བྱང་།  
 mtsho lho མཚོ་ལྷོ།  
 mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྒོན།  
 muweihui 牧委会  
 nam mkha' ནམ་མཁའ།  
 Ningbo 宁波  
 Ningmute 宁木特  
 Ningmute huanghe diaoqiao 宁木特黄河吊桥  
 nyi do ཉི་དོ།  
 nyi ma mtsho ཉི་མ་མཚོ།  
 nyi ma rol tshogs ཉི་མ་རོལ་ཚོགས།  
 nyin mtha' ཉིན་མཐའ།  
 o ya ཨོ་ཡ།  
 Oula 欧拉  
 pa li པ་ལི།  
 pad ma bsam grub པད་མ་བསམ་གྲུབ།  
 paozhang 炮仗(面)  
 Papa 啪啪  
 phun tshogs dbang rgyal ཕུན་ཚོགས་དབང་རྒྱལ།  
 Qilian 祁连

Qinghai 青海

rab brtan རབ་བརྟན།

rdung len རྟུང་ལེན།

rdza chu kha རྩ་ཅུ་ཁ་ཀྱུ་ཁ།

rgya ma རྒྱ་མ།

rgya mo རྒྱ་མོ།

rgya mo skyid རྒྱ་མོ་སྐྱིད།

rig 'dzin sgrol ma རིག་འཛིན་སྐྱོལ་མ།

rma chen རྩ་ཆེན།

rma chu རྩ་ཅུ།

rma lho རྩ་ལྷོ།

rta bo རྟ་བོ།

rta mgrin skyabs རྟ་མགྲིན་སྐྱབས།

rta mgrin tshe ring རྟ་མགྲིན་ཆེ་རིང་།

rta rkyang dmar རྟ་རྒྱང་དམར།

rtsam pa རུས་པ།

rtse chu རེ་ཅུ།

ru skor རུ་སྐོར།

rwa rgya རུ་རྒྱ།

sa sgye ས་སྐྱེ།

Sai'eryong 赛尔永

sangs rgyas bkra shis སངས་རྒྱས་བཀྲ་ཤིས།

sbra rnying སྤྲ་རྣམ་པ།

sbrang rtsi སྤྲང་རུ་ཅི།

sdi སྤི།

sdi chu སྤི་ཅུ།

sdi khog སྤི་ཁོག།

ser shul སེར་ཤུལ།

sgar སྐར།

sgra snyan སྐར་སྟན།

sgrol ma སྐྱོལ་མ།

sha la ཤ་ལ།

Shandong 山东

shel ka ra ཤེལ་ཀ་ར།

Shiqu xian 石渠县



shug pa ལུག་པ།  
 Sichuan ངུ་ཁུ།  
 ska chung སྐ་ཅུང་།  
 skad 'phrin སྐད་འཕྲིན།  
 skal bzang don ldan སྐལ་བཟང་དོན་ལྡན།  
 ske rags སྐེ་རགས།  
 skon སྐོན།  
 skyabs 'gro སྐལ་པ་འགོ།  
 sngags 'chang rin po che སྔགས་འཆང་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།  
 sngags pa སྔགས་པ།  
 snying nye snying nye སྙིང་ཉེ། སྙིང་ཉེ།  
 so'u chen སོ་འུ་ཆེན།  
 sog rdzong སོག་རྫོང་།  
 sokwo, sog po སོལ་པོ།  
 spyi srung སྤྱི་སྲུང་།  
 srib lung སྤེན་ལུང་།  
 stag lha tshe ring སྟག་ལྷ་ཆེ་རིང་།  
 su'u chen སུ་འུ་ཆེན།  
 Suqing སུ་ཁྱིང་།  
 Taishan འཛོམས་ཀློང་།  
 Tongde འཕྲིན་ལུང་།  
 Tonghua འཕྲིན་ལུང་།  
 tse dpag skyabs ཆོ་དཔག་སྐལ་པ།  
 tshang ཆང་།  
 tsho chung ཆོ་ཅུང་།  
 tshod ma ཆོད་མ།  
 tshul khirms ཆུ་ལྷོ་མཁའ་།  
 tsi pa ཅི་པ།  
 Wang Guangliang རྒྱ་གཡུང་ལུང་།  
 be'u la བེ་འུ་ལ།  
 Weila བེ་ལྷ་ལ།  
 Weixin བེ་ཁྱིང་།  
 Wutong བུ་ཏོང་།  
 Xiadawu ཁྱིང་ལུང་།  
 Xiahe ཁྱིང་ལུང་།

Xiala 夏拉

Xining 西宁

Xinjiang 新疆

ya ཡ།

yar bstod ཡར་བསྟོན།

yar ston ཡར་སྟོན།

Youganning 优干宁

yul ཡུལ།

yul rgan nyin ཡུལ་རྒྱན་ཉིན།

zam kha ཟམ་ཁ།

Zequ 泽曲

Zhoulong 周龙

zhun རྩུན།

ziling ཟིལ་འོང།

Zuomao 作毛